

**Report of Archaeological Watching Brief
March – May 2005
Burghead, Moray.**

Client: Halcrow Group Ltd for Scottish Water.

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Non-Technical Summary

Stuart Farrell was commissioned by Halcrow Group Ltd on behalf of Scottish Water in March 2005 to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Burghead, Moray. This work follows on recommendations made by the author in a desktop and walkover survey.

Work revealed no dateable archaeological deposits, as most of the work was located to areas of existing services. A possible part of the eastern rampart was noted in a couple of test pits in Forteath Street, though no finds were made.

No recommendations for further archaeological work have been proposed.

1. Introduction

This report is for an archaeological watching brief conducted for Halcrow Group Ltd on behalf of Scottish Water by the author for water mains renewals at Burghead, Moray. This work is following on recommendations made in previous archaeological survey work.

The work was conducted between March 17th and May 13th 2005.

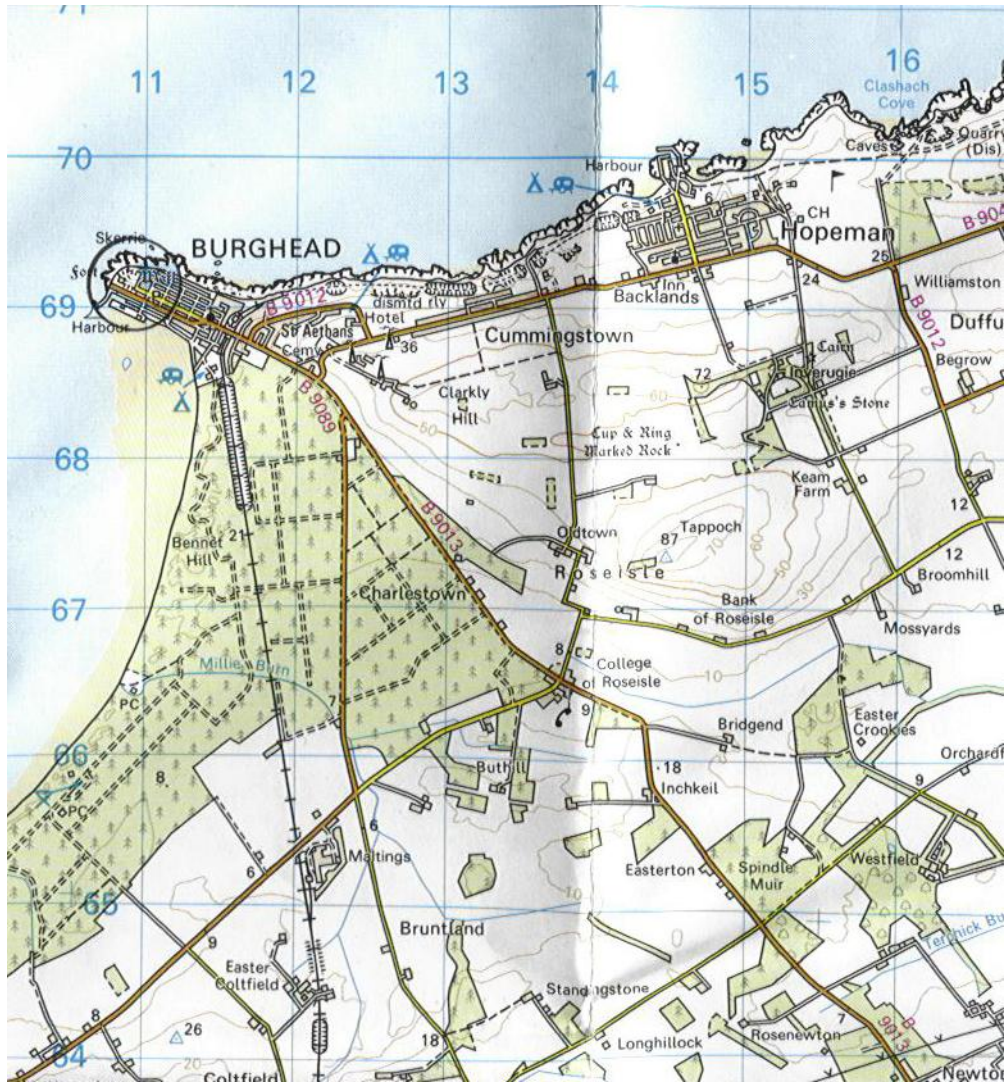
2. Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following for their help during the work:

- Mr. M Mackay, of Halcrow Group Ltd;
- Staff of Scottish Water Contracting for onsite works.

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Figure 1 - General Location 1:50,000
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3. Historical Background

The watching brief lies in the area of the following sites as noted in the desktop and walkover survey (Farrell 2004):

1 – Burghead

MSMR – NJ16NW 1 & 5

NMRS – NJ16NW 1 & 5

Grid Ref: NJ 1088/6914

Type – Fort, Pictish Stones

Status – Scheduled Ancient Monument

Noted in MSMR and NMRS of 'The mutilated remains of a massive promontory fort, possibly dating from the 4th to 7th century AD, which was practically destroyed by early 19th century 'improvements'.

As planned by Roy in the mid-18th century the fort consisted of three ramparts with ditches, cutting off the headland of Burghead, on which lay a bisected, walled enclosure the larger of whose 'courts' on the NNE lay at a lower level than the other.

The cross-ramparts appear to have been about 800' in length and 180' in overall width, all three broken by an entrance about mid-way. They were destroyed by being 'hurled each into its foss and built over' (H W Young 1891). The enclosure measured about 1000' in maximum length and 600' in width. Excavation by Small of the higher court revealed that only a tiny portion near the Coastguard houses remained undisturbed. Sections through the remaining west rampart showed that the wall still stood some 10' high beneath a covering of sand. It is 27' to 28' wide and consists of rubble infill retained on either side by a carefully built revetting wall. None of the sections showed any evidence of domestic occupation, although temporary occupation was indicated during the Iron Age, Norse and Early Medieval periods. This agrees with the finds from Hugh Young's excavations in the early 1890's although he also found a Late Bronze Age spearhead (NJ16NW 31) and a Greek coin of Nero (54-68 AD).

The timbers which were thought to indicate timber-lacing of the walls are in fact probably supports for a wall-walk or other structures. Carbon 14 gives dates of AD 340 and 610 for them, and therefore, according to MacKie for the construction of the fort. He further assumes from this that it was built by the Picts in the early part of their period, and was not in existence during the Roman occupation of southern Scotland. It had previously been claimed as Roman and wrongly identified as Ptolemy's 'Pteroton Stratopedon'.

Only very mutilated fragments of the fort remain as a result of the various excavations and general destruction, the best-preserved portion being the N rampart. Traces of the cross rampart running WNW/ESE are evidenced by occasional exposure of rubble construction. Some of the finds from Young's excavations are in National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland (NMAS), others are in the museum at the harbour master's office at Burghead. Information from OS September 1963.

A programme of archaeological research, survey and limited excavation was undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd in preparation for the production and installation of interpretation boards. A topographic survey was carried out in order to accurately locate the positions of earlier excavations on the promontory. Watching briefs were maintained during the resurfacing of access tracks to the Coastguard houses and during excavation of foundations for four of the cairns on which display boards were to be mounted. However, no artefacts or archaeologically significant deposits were encountered.

NJ 109 691 At Burghead Fort, excavations were undertaken between February and April 2002, and a watching brief was conducted during further construction works between April and July 2002 in advance of the proposed construction of an interpretation centre within the 19th-century coastguard lookout. This lookout is set at the N end of the fort on top of the rampart which separates the upper and lower wards. The lookout is specifically excluded from the Scheduling of the fort.

The excavation of deposits within the lookout demonstrated that it had been built on top of extant rampart core material with little resultant disturbance of the rampart beneath. A section excavated through the rampart at this point demonstrated that it was stone-built of dump construction with no evidence for timber-lacing. The body of the rampart consisted

of a mixture of large waterworn stones and apparently quarried sandstone with pockets of large beach pebbles, within a sand matrix. Fragments of sandstone were present throughout. There appeared to be little organised structure to the rampart's construction, although some variation could be seen within the rampart core; for example, pockets of beach pebbles were locally prevalent. Larger stones were visible towards the base of the section, with more voids present, perhaps indicating that a layer of basal stones had been laid on the ground surface initially to mark out the line of the rampart and/or provide a firm foundation for the rampart. The section of rampart excavated measured 8m wide (max.) and 3.00-3.25m high (max.). The excavation within the lookout did not extend through the inner or outer faces of the rampart due to the constraints imposed by working within the confines of that building. No artefacts were recovered.

Sealed beneath the rampart was a sequence of well-preserved organic deposits. Further excavation of these deposits showed that there were two old land surfaces separated by windblown sand, with relict dune sands beneath. These land surfaces were organic-rich and contained charred plant remains. No features were noted within these deposits.'

2 – Burghead, Clavie Stone

MSMR – NJ16NW 3

NMRS – NJ16NW 3

Grid Ref: NJ 1097/6912

Type – Stone

Status – Scheduled Ancient Monument

Noted in MSMR and NMRS of 'A small circular erection of freestone situated on the Doorie. It stands about 4 feet high and 3 feet diameter. (Name Book 1870.)

The Clavie is associated with Hogmanay celebrations which are first recorded, in records of the Presbytery of Elgin, on January 11th, 1655. A burning tar barrel is carried from the south western extremity of the village to the Clavie where it is set into the Clavie. It is allowed to burn there for a short time before being hurled down the western slope of the hill. Before the stone pillar was erected by the late proprietor the tar barrel was placed on a hastily erected cairn on the Doorie. The celebrations are known as "The Burning of the Clavie".

The 'Clavie' is as described above. In the centre of its flat top is a socket-hole 8" in diameter, and 8" in depth. The 'Clavie' is still in use for celebrations. (OS 1963).

3 – Burghead, Old Burial Ground and St Aethan's Chapel

MSMR – NJ16NW 6

NMRS – NJ16NW 6

Grid Ref: NJ 1101/6909

Type – Burial Ground

Status – Scheduled Ancient Monument

Noted in MSMR and NMRS of 'The site of an old chapel the foundations of which were found AD 1840 when digging graves. Nothing appears to be known about it and even its dedication is in doubt; Bishop Ethernan, temp. late 6th century; Aedan, circa 563 AD, Columba's disciple; and his successor 'Aeta Eata' in the same see, being suggested. Local tradition says the stones from the chapel were used to build a mill about a mile west of the village at the mouth of the Millie Burn. Name Book 1870.

A fragment of a stone slab showing a hunting scene (NJ16NW 5 - Class III No. 7) was removed in 1891 from the coping of the graveyard wall; and a fragment with Stafford knot work was found within the churchyard (NJ16NW 5 - Class III No. 11).

No trace of the chapel remains. The stone slab showing a hunting scene (J R Allen and J Anderson 1903) is in the museum at the harbour master's office, Burghead and a fragment which may be the fragment with Staffordshire knotwork is also in the museum, (No acc. number). Nothing was seen of the stones mentioned by C Cordiner. (OS 1963).'

Conclusions

The three sites noted lie to the north end of the village, but to their whole extent archaeologically is unknown.

4. Objectives

To conduct a watching brief on the excavation of the pipe trenches to record those features revealed by excavation work. This work is to include the following:

- Watching brief
- Report on results

5. Methodology

A monitoring was made of the removal of tar and subsoil's to an average depth of 1 metre for the trench excavations (only small sections of the proposed routes were excavated as new pipe was burst through existing). A back-acting machine with a toothed bucket excavated the trenches with possible archaeological features being cleaned by hand.

Weather on the days of work (March to May 2005) was generally bright and clear.

6. Watching Brief Investigation

The watching brief was carried out in accordance with accepted professional archaeological standards as published by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1999). Over the construction period a suitably qualified archaeologist was on site to carry out observations and assessment of the area affected by the excavation works.

Location of trenches as marked on enclosed plan.

Results

A monitoring of the excavation revealed the following:

An inspection of holes in Forteath Street (see map) revealed no archaeological deposits or features. Main area of direct watching brief concentrated around area the fort and nearby archaeological sites.

1 – Corner of Church Street and Forteath Street – 2m x 2.2m – in area of existing services - natural at depth of 250mm.

2 – Church Street - 1m x 3m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 0.9m.

3 – Church Street - 2m x 2m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 0.9m.

4 – Church Street - 1m x 3m N-S – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 0.9m.

5 – Church Street - 2m x 2m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 1m.

- 6** – Church Street - 1m x 1.5m – in area of existing services - natural of orange-brown sandy gravel at depth of 0.5m.
- 7** – Church Street – 1.5m x 3.5m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 1m.
- 8** – Church Street - 3m x 2.8m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 0.9m.
- 9** – Church Street – 2 pits both 1m² – in area of existing services - natural at depth of 0.4m.
- 10** – Church Street – 1.5m x 2m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 0.9m.
- 11** – Church Street – 1.5m x 2.5m – in area of existing services - natural at depth of 0.5m.
- 12** – Church Street - 1m x 1.2m – in area of existing services - natural at depth of 0.8m.
- 13** – Church Street - 1m x 1.2m – in area of existing services - natural at depth of 0.9m.
- 14** – Church Street – 1.5m² – in area of existing services - natural at depth of 0.5m.
- 15** – Church Street - 1m x 2.2m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 1m.
- 16** – Bath Street - 1m x 1.7m – in area of existing services - natural sand at depth of 0.5m. Lot of rounded stones in fill, possibly from adjacent wall.
- 17** – Bath Street - 1m x 2.1m – in area of existing services - natural at depth of 0.5m. Find of butchered animal bone in topsoil (not retained). Find of stone, possibly vitrified, though no indication of burning may be natural.
- 18** – Bath Street – 0.9m x 2.5m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 0.9m.
- 19** – Bath Street – 1.2m x 2.2m – in area of existing services - natural sand at depth of 0.3m at W end of trench, 0.5m at E end, inspection reveals it to be windblown over an earlier land surface, visible especially in the N facing section.
- 20** – Bath Street – 1.2m x 1.8m – large amount of sandstone (both rounded and angular) with a loam like fill to depth of 1m. Existing mains not revealed.

21 – Bath Street - 1m x 3.5m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 0.9m, some angular and rounded stones in fill. (Trench was enlarged as existing mains was curved)

22 – Forteach Street – 1.2m x 2.5m – in area of existing services – some angular sandstone, though very clean to W. Deposit including flecks of charcoal, and occasionally cremated bone at depth of 1m. Also contains fragments of mussel shells and occasional small fragments of animal bone, date unknown.

23 – Forteach Street - 1m² – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 0.8m. Again find of crushed shells in a charcoal flecked deposit to the SE corner. Fill includes rounded and angular sandstone.

24 – Forteach Street – 0.8m x 1m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 0.8m. Then similar deposit as found in trenches 22 & 23.

25 – Forteach Street - 1m x 0.9m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 0.9m.

26 – Forteach Street - 2m x 2.2m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 1m.

27 – Forteach Street – Not seen – in area of existing services.

28 – Forteach Street - 1m x 1.2m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 1m. Rubble sandstone at depth of 0.5m.

29 – Forteach Street - 1m x 0.9m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 1m. Rubble sandstone at depth of 0.5m.

30 – Grant Street - 1m x 2.5m NS – in area cut heavily by existing services - natural sand at depth of 1m at N, only mixed deposits to S.

31 – Grant Street - 1m x 1.2m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 1m.

32 – Grant Street - 1m x 1.3m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 1m.

33 – Grant Street - 1m x 1.2m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 1m.

34 – Grant Street – 1.2m x 1.5m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 0.8m.

35 – Grant Street - 1m x 1.2m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 0.8m.

36 – Grant Street - 1m x 1.3m – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 0.8m.

37 – Grant Street - 12m x 2m (L-shaped for hydrants) – in area of existing services – mixed soil deposits to a depth of 1m.

38 – Dunbar Street – Open cut trench made along the length of east side of street 0.35m wide and 1m deep. Initial work involved test pits at corner with Church Street for existing services, which revealed mixed soils to a depth of 1m. At point A was revealed a natural bank of gravel with a dark fill against it, within the base of this fill was a dark lense of material at a depth of 0.8m, the bank looked natural and there was no indication that it was a man-made feature. Only natural ground was visible back towards Church Street. Again at point B bank looked natural, with no indication of any archaeological deposits.

By the Doorie at point C-D was revealed a deposit 7m in length of crushed shells 100mm thick below a layer of tar. Information from owner of 89 Dunbar Street, that where garage now stands was a formerly a baiting shed, hence the shells. The tar is probably from barking nets and both deposits are likely to be 19th/20th century in date.

Below: View of bank at point A facing W – scale 1m.



7. Conclusions

Overall the results were very limited due to both the size of excavated trenches being small and being closely related to the site of existing services to allow for connections, revealing only mixed deposits.

The only find of interest was a possible continuation of the eastern rampart as noted in trenches 20 & 22 with an underlying deposit of an unknown date.

8. Recommendations

No recommendations with regard any further fieldwork for this project is to be proposed due to no features being revealed, and that no other work is required.

9. Archive

The following is to be deposited in the National Monuments Record of Scotland in Edinburgh:

- Notebook of results
- Colour Slides
- Copy of this report

A copy of this report has been deposited with Moray SMR.

10. Discovery & Excavation in Scotland

A short summary of the results of this project will be submitted to the Council for Scottish Archaeology's publication *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*.

11. References

Farrell, S (2004) Report of Archaeological Desktop & Walkover Survey Clarkyhill Water Mains Renewal Project, Moray. Unpublished report – copy held in Moray SMR and the NMRS.

IFA (1999) By-laws, Standards and Policy Statements of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. Reading.

Appendix 1 – Photographic Register

1 – View of hole 1 at corner of Church Street.	March 2005
2 – View of hole 2 in Church Street facing E.	April 2005
3 – View of hole 3 in Church Street facing E.	April 2005
4 – View of hole 4 in Church Street facing W.	April 2005
5 – View of hole 6 in Church Street facing E.	April 2005
6 – View of excavations in Church Street facing E.	April 2005
7 – View of hole 11 in Church Street facing W.	April 2005
8 – View of hole 11 in Church Street facing W.	April 2005
9 – View of hole 15 in Church Street facing W.	April 2005
10 – View of holes 12 & 13 in Church Street facing NW.	April 2005
11 – View of hole 16 in Bath Street facing N – scale 1m.	April 2005
12 – View of hole 16 in Bath Street facing E – scale 1m.	April 2005
13 – View of hole 17 in Bath Street facing W – scale 1m.	April 2005
14 – View of hole 17 in Bath Street facing SW – scale 1m.	April 2005
15 – Detail of vitrified stone ? from trench 17.	April 2005
16 – View of hole 18 in Bath Street facing NW – scale 1m.	April 2005
17 – View of hole 18 in Bath Street facing S – scale 1m.	April 2005
18 – View of hole 20 in Bath Street facing N – scale 1m.	April 2005
19 – View of original hole 21 in Bath Street facing S – scale 1m.	April 2005
20 – View of hole 21 in Bath Street facing N – scale 1m.	April 2005
21 – View of hole 23 in Forteach Street facing SW – scale 1m.	April 2005
22 – View of hole 23 in Forteach Street facing W – scale 1m.	April 2005
23 – View of hole 22 in Forteach Street facing NW – scale 1m.	April 2005
24 – View of hole 22 in Forteach Street facing W – scale 1m.	April 2005
25 – View of hole 21 in Bath Street facing W – scale 1m.	April 2005
26 – View of hole 21 in Bath Street facing N – scale 1m.	April 2005
27 – View of hole 36 in Grant Street facing E – scale 1m.	May 2005
28 – View of hole 37 in Grant Street facing N – scale 1m.	May 2005
29 – View of hole 37 in Grant Street facing S – scale 1m.	May 2005
30 – View of point A in Dunbar Street facing W – scale 1m.	May 2005
31 – View of point A in Dunbar Street facing N – scale 1m.	May 2005
32 – View of trench in Dunbar Street facing N – scale 1m.	May 2005
33 – View of trench in Dunbar Street facing S – scale 1m.	May 2005
34 – View of trench in Dunbar Street facing N – scale 1m.	May 2005
35 – View of trench in Dunbar Street facing N – scale 1m.	May 2005
36 – View of trench in Dunbar Street facing S – scale 1m.	May 2005
37 – Detail of deposit in trench in Dunbar Street facing E – scale 1m.	May 2005
38 – Detail of deposit in trench in Dunbar Street facing E – scale 1m.	May 2005
39 – View of deposit in trench in Dunbar Street facing NE – scale 1m.	May 2005
40 – View of trench in Dunbar Street facing S – scale 1m.	May 2005
41 – View of trench in Dunbar Street facing NE – scale 1m.	May 2005
42 – View of trench in Dunbar Street facing N – scale 1m.	May 2005